BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Best Place on Earth

Education Report

Province encourages the next generation of readers

Children who develop their reading skills are rewarded with a world of opportunity. Raise-a-Reader, a series of campaigns that raise funds for literacy programs, recently celebrated its 10th anniversary. Now a national effort, Raise-a-Reader is an example of B.C.'s leadership in promoting literacy across Canada. For the third year in a row, the Province matched donations to the B.C. Raise-a-Reader campaigns, helping them reach a record of nearly $1 million.

Band and staff at Hovington by Jennifer, as part of the B.C. Raise-a-Reader campaign.

HOT TOPIC

British Columbia is a leader in ensuring that students and staff are safe in our schools. Nevertheless, the recent tragic events at Dawson College in Montreal, as well as several similar events in the US, highlight the need for continued vigilance to keep B.C.'s schools safe.

Student and staff safety is a top priority for government, and it is important that our schools are prepared to handle incidents when they occur. Whether faced with school bullying, an earthquake evacuation, or a critical incident, students, parents and staff need to know our schools are safe.

The Ministry of Education has developed comprehensive materials to ensure schools have proper policies and procedures in place. In March 2004, the ministry released provincial guidelines on school safety as part of the Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools Strategy. The strategy helps schools provide an environment where students feel safe and can focus on learning.

In August, the ministry asked every B.C. school district to report on policies and codes of conduct that address the provincial guidelines and safe school-related issues. The reports – to be submitted in December – will provide a clear picture of our progress on school safety.

By working together and planning properly we can help make every school a better, safer place to learn.

Reading Corner

What happens when a too-small mouse with too-big ears falls in love with a human princess? Banished by his father and clan, Despereaux tries to escape the dungeon and rescue the princess. Kate DiCamillo's award-winning novel looks at the nature of hope, love and forgiveness. This book is suitable for students in grades 3–7.

THE TALE OF DESPEREAUX
Written by Kate DiCamillo
Illustrated by Timonthy Basil Ering

Message from Minister Shirley Bond

Honourable Shirley Bond
Minister of Education

Government has started a dialogue about the future of health care. The Conversation on Health gives all British Columbians an opportunity to share their ideas on how to make B.C. healthier, and how to improve, renew and sustain our health system.

Some of you may have already taken part in the Conversation on Health through the website www.theconversationonhealth.ca. It's especially important that those of us in the education system get involved because we know that schools help shape the attitudes and beliefs of students. If we help students develop healthy living habits now, they are likely to be healthy and successful adults.

The challenge we face is that one in four B.C. children is overweight or obese. This is something my ministry and this government takes very seriously. In fact, the Legislature struck a health committee to look into childhood obesity and recommend ways that government can help. The committee's website – www.myhealthyplace.ca – is great; encourage your students and children to visit it today.

I'm proud that this government is committed to leading the way in healthy living and physical fitness. I'm also pleased that during my school district visits I've seen individual schools and whole districts making progress—taking steps like making their vending machines junk food free or participating in Action Schools! BC.

Now, to make further gains, we need to hear from you—from students, parents, educators, and school officials. Do you have an idea to improve the health of B.C.'s students, and strengthen our health system? Do you have an opinion on issues like vending machines, physical education and graduation requirements, and smoking?

Speak out. Be heard. Join the conversation.